

LANCASHIRE COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY

Meeting to be held on 14 December 2020

REPORTS FROM MEMBERS ON OUTSIDE BODIES

Contact for further information:

Mark Nolan, Clerk and Monitoring Officer - Telephone 01772 86720

Executive Summary

The Chairman has agreed that as appropriate, Members who sit on outside bodies provide a report to the full Authority to feedback on key topics discussed in other forums such as Local Government Association meetings.

Recommendation

Members are asked to note and endorse the report.

That we work with the programme officer at the National Fire Chief Council (NFCC) who is taking forward the new Person-Centred approach to Home Fire safety visits with Fire and Rescue Services.

Member development video link to be shared with members.

Information

County Councillor Nikki Hennessy has attended the following Local Government Association (LGA) meetings:

Fire Fighters Pensions Scheme Advisory Board (SAB) - 17th September 2020

Key Points Raised

Discussion on retrospective correction of historic pay mistakes, pension's administration market and complexity and abatement guidance.

The SAB secretariat response to administration strategy consultation.

The Fire Commission - 25th September 2020

Key Points Raised

Home Office - Jonny Bugg, Head of Fire Strategy & Reform Unit

Developments with the fire reform agenda. The Minister's 3 key priorities of people, professionalism and governance. Mr Bugg stated that whilst Covid-19 had been extremely challenging, it had also helped to improve and develop dialogue and collaborative working which had not existed in some areas pre-pandemic.

With regard to the role of Police & Crime Commissioners (PCCs) in the context of fire governance reform. A draft report on the findings was due to be submitted to the Home Secretary in October.

Members raised the following issues and concerns:

- The Government's proposed planning reforms on fire safety, particularly in relation to the extension of permitted development rights.
- Closer working between local and central levels was crucial in the Covid-19 response and in the wider proposed reforms to the sector.
- The need to look again at the issue of revenue-raising by Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) through the council tax precept. 70% of properties in Somerset are below band D and are therefore not able to raise as much revenue as other areas.
- The need to see greater community involvement in decision making around fire sector reforms and Covid-19.
- Unsafe cladding on buildings was still a huge issue. The Minister saw this issue as a top priority and significant funding had been made available to address it.
- The speed of cladding removal was very worrying.
- Concern about the cost to FRAs' revenue budgets of the Fire Pension Scheme and additional liabilities arising from the Sargeant case.
- The issue of capital spending and whether there would be a longer-term capital settlement for FRAs in the Spending Review.

Learning from Covid-19

Members gave feedback on the lessons their Authorities and Services had drawn from responding to Covid-19, the challenges they faced and any issues that they would like the LGA to raise with government in the event of a second wave this autumn.

- Kick-started a culture change in how services operate and in the working patterns of employees. This should be embraced as it should lead to a more diverse, flexible and efficient workforce and at the same time reduce the sector's carbon footprint.
- Improved working relationships with partners dramatically. Covid-19 was a catalyst for positive change.
- How we capture the positivity and maintain it moving forward.
- We really need to know what has not worked.
- The tripartite agreement has worked well in Avon. No staff have been off sick. Working well with local community.
- Embraced virtual meetings but needs more funding.
- Firefighters have been used to support PPE procurement and to support the Ambulance Service. Staff sickness absence reduced during the pandemic. The Authority's decision-making process hasn't been hindered but IT systems need updating.

Building Safety update

It was reported that the pace of remediation of buildings with dangerous cladding remained slow and had not been helped by the Covid situation. The Minister had set a new target to get work started on all buildings with ACM cladding by Christmas. However, data collection on buildings with dangerous non-ACM cladding had stalled.

Other issues of concern including problems with the External Wall Fire Review (EWS1) process preventing people obtaining mortgages, and fire risk assessors being unable to get insurance to carry out assessment of external cladding systems.

Lord Porter had given evidence to the HCLG Select Committee which was carrying out pre-legislative scrutiny of the Building Safety Bill. In its present form, the Bill doesn't deal with the issue of costs of work and who should ultimately pay. The points arising included:

- Extension of permitted development rights, particularly the conversion of offices to flats was a real concern in terms of fire safety.
- Members agreed that the 'locked in equity' issue where residents were effectively trapped in flats that were unsaleable, was the key issue that needed to be addressed.
- The Building Safety Bill contained a mechanism that should prevent further tragedies in new build blocks but it didn't address what to do with the existing stock.
- HMOs in student areas were considered to be a real risk for fire services.
- It was suggested that local authorities should be working more closely with fire services and authorities to achieve more effective fire safety in the planning system as it was in everybody's best interests. The LGA was responding to the Government's planning reform consultations, including outlining the concerns over fire safety. Encourage individual local authorities to do the same. The Building Safety Bill and the Planning White Paper were currently incompatible.

The Fire Service Management Committee (FSMC) - 16th October 2020

Key Points Raised

The Person-Centred approach to the Home Fire Safety Visit

Presentation by Rick Hylton - Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Essex County FRS and Ged Devereux – NFCC Strategic Health.

- Growing understanding in the sector that in order to make further improvements, prevention work should include risk reduction measures developed around the wider needs of the individual, not just the physical structure of their home.

- The Government had recognised that there needed to be greater consistency across the country in this regard and the current NFCC project was designed to address this.
- Variation in the prevalence of risk factors across the country and explained that the Framework identified core data that needed to be collected to understand those risks. This work was closely allied to the NFCC's Community Risk Programme. The NFCC was well placed to deliver the project through the Central Programme Office.
- NFCC had engaged with a range of FRS stakeholders in a series of regional workshops to obtain their views on the programme. All FRSs that participated accepted the rationale for the person-centred approach and there was broad consensus that the fire service prevention pathway needed to be strengthened to put it on an equal footing with protection and response. The new approach to Home Fire Safety Visits sought to amalgamate the best elements of the Home Fire Risk Check and the Safe and Well Visit, with the aim of reducing risk and changing behaviour.

Following the introduction, Members raised the following points:

- It would be important to work with council social care teams on the new approach, but concerns were raised about possible data protection issues.
- Questions were raised about how it can be ensured that the new approach is widely taken up by FRSs. Response was that a programme officer at the NFCC was taking this forward with FRSs. In addition, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services was going to make this part of their inspection process, so it was important that all services embraced it.
- Engagement with Registered Social Landlords was considered key to the success of the new approach.

Police & Crime Commissioner Review

LGA submission to the review was written on behalf of the Safer & Stronger Communities Board and FSMC. The LGA's position is that there should be no mandatory transfers of governance either to PCCs or Mayors. Where there was no local agreement to a proposed transfer of governance, the contested business case should be looked at by a panel with a range of expertise.

Spending Review

A final report has been submitted to the Home Office. Members expressed their support for the work that had been done so far.

Marauding Attacks

Marauding Terrorist Firearms Attacks (MTFA) and knife attacks were becoming an increasing risk for firefighters attending incidents and measures needed to be introduced to protect them from that risk. Some discussions with the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) were

taking place but agreement had not yet been reached with them about the scope of firefighters' response to MTFA's.

Members agreed that it was unacceptable for firefighters potentially to be attending incidents without the training to protect themselves in the event of an MTFA or knife attack.

FSMC update

The Annual Fire Conference would be going ahead as a virtual event next March as a result of the coronavirus restrictions.

The first of member development videos would be uploaded on the LGA website at the end of October. Members requested a link for this to be circulated to the Committee.

Financial Implications

None

Sustainability or Environmental Impact

None

Equality and Diversity Implications

None

Human Resource Implications

None

Business Risk Implications

None

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact
None		
Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate:		